

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for supplying calling party information to a called party via a network comprising a telephone network, a data network, and at least one gateway device connected to both the telephone network and the data network, comprising:
 - receiving by the gateway device, via the telephone network, signaling information representing a telephone call from the calling party to the called party, the signaling information comprising called party information;
 - obtaining the calling party information based on the signaling information;
 - and
 - providing the calling party information to the called party via the data network.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein providing the calling party information to the called party comprises displaying an instant message on a display device.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the telephone network is a public services telephone network.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the telephone network is a wireless telephone network.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein providing the calling party information to the called party comprises displaying the calling party information on a display device visible to the called party.

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6. The method of claim 1, wherein obtaining the calling party information comprises connecting to a switch in the telephone network based on the called party information and obtaining calling party information from the switch.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein providing the calling party information to the called party via the data network comprises providing the calling party information to a server in the data network associated with the called party.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein providing the calling party information to the called party comprises providing the calling party information using an instant messaging server.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising using the instant messaging server to authenticate the calling party.

10. A method of supplying caller identification information from a calling party to a called party via a public telephone network, using a caller identification gateway, by which the calling party places a telephone call by transmitting signaling information corresponding to a telephone number of the called party over the public telephone network, the method comprising:

accepting the signaling information corresponding to the telephone number associated with the called party;

establishing a path through the public telephone network based on the signaling information;

selecting a telephone switch corresponding to a destination telephone terminal corresponding to the telephone number associated with the called party;

retrieving by the caller identification gateway from the telephone switch, the caller identification information corresponding to the calling party;

transmitting the caller identification information to a user service center server using an internet protocol;

transmitting, by the user service center server, the caller identification information to an instant messaging server over an internet protocol data network; and

presenting the caller identification information to the called party by displaying an instant message provided by the instant messaging server on a computer screen of a called party.

11. Apparatus comprising:

a telephone network;

a switch connected to the telephone network;

a data network;

a data controller connected to the data network;

a gateway connected to both the switch and the data controller, the gateway being capable of: (1) receiving, via the switch, signaling information representing a telephone call from a calling party to a called party, the signaling information comprising called party information; (2) obtaining a calling party information based on the signaling information; and (3) providing the calling party information to the called party via the data controller.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the gateway is capable of providing the calling party information to the called party via the data controller is further capable of providing instruction for displaying an instant message on a display device visible to the called party.

13. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the gateway is capable of obtaining the calling party information via the switch.

14. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the gateway capable of providing the calling party information to the called party is further capable of displaying the calling party information on a display device visible to the called party.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the gateway is capable of providing the calling party information to the called party via the data controller is further capable of providing the calling party information to a server in the data network associated with the called party.

16. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the gateway capable of providing the calling party information to the called party is further capable of providing instructions to an instant messaging server for providing the calling party information.

17. The apparatus of claim 16, further capable of providing instructions to the instant messaging server for authenticating the calling party.

18. A system comprising:

- a telephone network for receiving a caller connection request;
- a data network for providing calling party information;
- a gateway device, connecting said telephone network to said data network, for: (1) receiving via the telephone network signaling

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information representing a telephone call from a calling party to a called party, the signaling information comprising called party information; (2) obtaining the calling party information based on the signaling information; and (3) providing the calling party information to the called party via the data network.

19. The system of claim 18, wherein the gateway device for providing the calling party information to the called party comprises means for providing instructions that cause a display device visible to the called party to display an instant message.
20. The system of claim 18, wherein the gateway device for obtaining the calling party information comprises a means for connecting to a switch in the telephone network based on the called party information and obtaining calling party information from the switch.
21. The system of claim 18, wherein the data network for providing the calling party information to the called party comprises a means for causing a display device visible to the called party to display the calling party information.
22. The system of claim 21, wherein the gateway device for providing the calling party information to the called party via the data network comprises means for providing the calling party information to a server in the data network associated with the called party.
23. The system of claim 21, wherein the gateway device for providing the calling party information to the called party comprises means for providing the calling party information using an instant messaging server.

24. The system of claim 23, further comprising means for using the instant messaging server to authenticate the calling party.